(d) if so, whether any concrete steps in his regard have been worked out?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI V.V.N. SOMU): (a) to (d) The equirement of funds is estimated by the Ministry of Defence, in consultation with he Service Headquarters on the basis of nticipated, obligatory and contractual ayments, regular and recurrent xpenditure as well as new schemes nder the ongoing modernisation rogramme of the Defence Services. The equirement of funds for the current year as projectd by the Ministry of Defence o the Ministry of Finance, to enable a ecision on the actual allocation, keeping n view the overall availability of national esources, national security and the equirements of different sectors.

Modernisation of our Armed Forces is n on-going process which takes into ccount the changing threat scenario, the dvancement of technology, the global nd regional security environment and he availability of resources. A concerted xercise was undertaken this year, as in revious years to determine the priorities f modernisation, and the resources to be llocated in this context.

Diversion of National Highway-54

1662. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the latest position on the diversion of National Highways-54 at Ramnagar near Silchar Town;

(b) whether the project has been cleared and funds sanctioned;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the latest position of the approach road of Katakhal bridge on National Highway-54?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (c) Alignment for diversion is approved. However, the bridge over river Barak at Badrighat on the bypass is under finalisation. During 1996-97 funds have been provided for payment of compensation for land.

(d) The approach road was sanctioned in February, 1996 and the work is in progress. The two Railway overbridges in the approaches are being entrusted to Railways.

New Telephone Exchanges in Karnataka

1663. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up new telephone exchanges with latest technology in Karnataka during the current year; and

(b) if so, the names of the places where these are proposed to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) New Telephone Exchanges with the latest technology are planned for commissioning at Mysore, Bangalore, Belgaum and Hubli in Karnataka during 1996-97.

Extension of reservation for SCs/STs/ OBCs in Defence Services

1664. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering extension of reservations for SCs/STs/ OBCs in recruitment to defence services; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor?